

Pulicat Lake. As there is no specimen at the BNHS, the measurements of the species is not given in the HANDBOOK. However, the biometrics of three individuals ringed by Natarajan and Balasubramanian is the only available measurements for this species from India which fall within the range of the measurements given by Cramp (1985) with slight variation in tarsus length (Table 1). The measurements obtained from the remaining individuals tallies with the measurements of Cramp (loc. cit.) with slight variations. These slight variations may be due to the differences in the measurements of the museum and live specimens. But the measurements given by Vivek Menon is no way in the close ranges of this species, except the

tarsus. For example wing, bill, and tail measurements exceeded the maximum ranges by 31 mm, 10 mm and 28 mm respectively. The fork (the difference between T1 (63) and T6 (107) is 44 mm, which is also too much for this species, as this species has almost a squarish tail with the maximum fork length of 16 mm. From the measurements the species mentioned in the note (JBNHS Vol. 89(1): 120) is not the black tern but probably a common tern *Sterna hirundo*.

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#### 16. FOREST EAGLE OWL (*BUBO NIPALENSIS* HODGSON) — A PREDATOR OF THE INDIAN GIANT SQUIRREL (*RATUFA INDICA*)

On 29 October 1992, at about 9.30 a.m., I was conducting a routine bird census along the trail across the evergreen Forests of Karian Shola National Park (10°28'N; 76°50'E) near Top Slip, Tamil Nadu. Hearing a commotion ahead, I saw a Forest Eagle Owl flying across the trail a little distance from me, and alighting on a small tree. Dangling from its talons was the partially eaten carcass of an Indian Giant Squirrel. For nearly five minutes the owl remained perched there ignoring the ceaseless agitations by the many bulbuls and drongos around. Eventually the owl saw me and flew away deeper into the Forest, leaving the prey hanging on the limb. A couple of days later, the carcass was still there.

The Forest Eagle Owl is an efficient predator against a variety of forest dwelling small to medium sized animals, a list of which is given by Ali and Ripley (1987). Since the Giant Squirrel does not feature in this list, and considering the endangered status of these squirrels, I decided that this rarely seen incident was worthy of recording. Incidentally, Borges (1986) reports a predation attempt on this squirrel by the Black Eagle (*Ictinaetus malayensis*) a raptor which is seen regularly at the Karian Shola National Park.

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#### 17. NOTES ON THE STATUS AND ECOLOGY OF THE CEYLON FROGMOUTH (*BATRACHOSTOMUS MONILIGER* BLYTH) FROM THE ANAIMALAI HILLS OF TAMIL NADU

The status of the Ceylon Frogmouth *Batrachostomus moniliger* was little known and was a cause for concern until the publication of Sugathan's (1981, JBNHS 78: 309-316) in which he revealed that the bird exists in reasonable numbers in the state of Kerala. His surveys did not, however, cover the adjacent hill forests of Western

Tamil Nadu from where no published information on the bird exists. This note throws light on its occurrence in Tamil Nadu and its status in the Anaimalai hills. Anecdotal information on the birds' habits and habitat are also given.

During 22 months of intensive field-work in the forests of Topslip (10°28' N; 76°51' E), seven birds were encountered

by chance in the following three different localities. All these sites lie within the Indira Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary.

1. Karian Shola, 1 km from Topslip; Three birds (2 adults, 1 young). Seen regularly at roost between December 1991 and February 1993.

2. Varagaliar Shola, 24 km from Topslip: A pair, seen on 19 December 1992.

3. Seechali, c. 10 km from Topslip: A pair seen on 8 October 1992.

These three areas are just between 0.2 to 2 km east of the Kerala border. The birds were seen in two very different habitats, i.e. evergreen forest undergrowth and dense bamboo jungle, adding support to Sugathan's finding that their habitat choice is varied. The evergreen forest area is represented by tree species such as *Carallia*, *Polyalthia*, *Mesua*, *Myristica*, *Alseodaphne* and *Garcinia*. The bamboo forest is almost exclusively bamboo, but for occasional lofty trees like *Terminalia*, *Pterocarpus* and *Bombax*. This Catholic nature of the Frogmouth's habitat choice makes them less vulnerable to local extinction. This leaves room for optimism that the birds are less-specialised than once believed and may survive even in areas where the evergreen forests have been damaged.

The Karian Shola birds were first seen at their roost on 29 December 1991 as a pair. This pair roosted in the same general area, (albeit with some brief disappearances), and mostly on the very same perch, until February of 1993, i.e. a period of 14 months. The pair appeared with a young bird in November 1992, which stayed with the parents for 2 months, till January 1993.

The young bird would roost huddled and sandwiched between the parents. On one occasion, however, the young was seen roosting in a small plant some distance away.

The roosting birds were perched between c. 2 to 4 m above the ground. They would flush only when almost stumbled upon. They appeared very tame, allowing close approach, and seemed unperturbed by camera bulbs going off close by. When approached too closely, i.e. within a metre so, the birds would open their mouth wide revealing the extraordinarily large gape and the small grey flap of a tongue. Evidently this is a threat gesture, hitherto unreported by other observers.

The fact that seven of these cryptic, hard-to-find birds were recorded without actually searching for them, may mean that the bird may be much more common than is apparent. Sugathan (1981) also came to a similar conclusion after his extensive survey in Kerala.

These notes on the ceylon Frogmouths' habits, site-fidelity and parental care, although anecdotal, represent some of the first known information on this enigmatic bird. The Topslip area, with its convenient logistics, terrain and Frogmouth population, may be an ideal place to conduct a more detailed investigation of this species.

I thank my tribal guide Natarajan, but for whose "Frogmouth-eye" this note would never have materialised.

April 25, 1993

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#### 18. AN ALBINO MYNA *ACRIDOTHERES TRISTIS* (LINNAEUS)

On 18th September, 1992, I was going from Malda to Raiganj. These two are well known towns of West Bengal. While I was in the midst of Itahar and Raiganj our car stopped near Durgapur (a village of the district Uttar Dinajpur). I observed there a white Myna walking and feeding on the insects and food grains near the road side accompanied by three normal coloured common mynas (*Acridotheres tristis*). The albino was dusty white but the head was chocolate brown. Two brown stripes on each wing and on tail was clearly visible during flight. The colour of the

legs and cheek was pinkish instead of yellow but the colour of the bill was yellowish. I had no doubt that the bird was a common myna (*Acridotheres tristis*) and albino one due to lack of pigmentation. Its walking style and call was same as common myna's. Before I could get some more details the bird flew away with its three companions. I have never heard or seen albinism in common myna.

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#### 19. DISPERSED COMMUNAL ROOSTING IN COMMON MYNAS *ACRIDOTHERES TRISTIS* (LINNAEUS)

Common Mynas *Acridotheres tristis* roost at night in large noisy assemblages in trees (Sengupta 1982). In these roosts, song can continue late into the evening and disturbances can lead to renewed singing throughout the

night. In Singapore, this leads urban myna roosts to be regarded as troublesome on account of the noise (Hails 1985). Prior to entering the roost site, Common Mynas gather in pre-roost assemblies in open areas or on